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ABSTRACT

New Zealand Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand Aotearoa, a relatively small nation of 4 million people. The juxtaposition of Maori and European cultures presents an opportunity to contrast the highly spiritual nature of Maori culture with European traditions of linearity and rationality. This contrast can be especially appreciated in the consideration of career processes. The spiritual foundation of Maori culture provides quite a different outlook on the world. This different worldview provides another base for making career decision. This paper presents a brief examination of Maori culture in order to suggest how Maori integrate spiritual matters into careers. (Contains 14 references.) (GCP)

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Spirituality in Career From a New Zealand Maori Perspective

Dale S. Furbish & Lynette Reid

Introduction

New Zealand Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand *Aotearoa*, a relatively small nation of 4 million people. The country is formed from 2 islands and is situated in the South Pacific, to the southeast of Australia. New Zealand is a bi-cultural society in which European (mainly British) culture and Maori co-exist. About 13% of New Zealanders identify themselves as Maori.

While individual Maori embrace traditional Maori culture to varying degrees, *Te Ao Maori* (Maori world view) defines a distinctive culture. The juxtaposition of Maori and European cultures presents an opportunity to contrast the highly spiritual nature of Maori culture with European traditions of linearity and rationality. For our purposes, this contrast can be especially appreciated in the consideration of career processes. The spiritual foundation of Maori culture provides quite a different outlook on the world. This different worldview provides another base for making career decision.

Wairua or spirituality, like other key Maori concepts, has no one clear-cut meaning but a range of related meanings with many ramifications. Perhaps spirituality within Maoridom is best understood in terms suggested by Hansen (1997). "Spirituality may refer to beliefs and a worldview, it does not necessarily imply any organized religion" (p.189). Adding to the definition, Kratz (1987) suggests that spirituality can be thought of as providing "the deep integration, wholeness, a sense of the inter-relatedness of all of life" (p.4). Suffice it to say, spirituality is at the very foundation of Maori values and worldview.

Purposes/goals

We present a brief examination of Maori culture in order to suggest how Maori integrate spiritual matters into careers. The pre-eminence of spirituality for career decisions of Maori stands in contrast to the Western traditions of positivism, rationality and linearity. Although the Western

traditions have long predominated career theory and practice, recognition of spiritual influences on careers has recently emerged and its "legitimacy" for understanding careers established. Through reference to a non-Western culture, such as Maori, we will hopefully show that contemporary careers can indeed be the product of deeply spiritual influences.

Further, viewing career through the lens of another culture can stimulate reflection about the spirituality of our own careers and those of our clients. Although the roots of Maori spirituality reside in traditional beliefs that are of ancient origin, Maori still successfully incorporate the spiritual within modern career patterns. That Maori careers occur in a predominantly Western environment suggests the potency of a spiritual basis for careers. Spirituality assists Maori define self-meaning in their career. Maori provide a model for acknowledging the role of the spiritual in career and thus can serve as a catalyst for seeking the spiritual in our own career and those of our clients.

A Maori World View And Career

An examination of the major tenets of Maori culture is essential to understanding a Maori worldview. We cannot do justice to Te Ao Maori in such a brief space, but some key concepts can be presented in order to suggest their influence on career for Maori.

Interconnectedness

A pervasive concept for Maori is a holistic worldview in which even contrasting elements are seen as unitary. This inclusive philosophy can be recognized in the Maori account of creation. The Maori ancestor Rangi, the sky father, and Papa, the earth mother, were locked together in an embrace, casting darkness and night on the universe. The children of Rangi and Papa sought a way out of the darkness into the light. Each of these children is a source for, and is identified with, a particular area of the universe: the wind and storm, the sea, the forest and birds, vegetation and people. According to this conceptualization of the universe, humans are called to identify themselves with the different spiritual powers and to take part in the whole movement of the universe.

Different spiritual powers born of Rangi and Papa are responsible for bringing three baskets of knowledge from the heavens. Traditional Maori thinking presents three sources of knowledge:

> The experience of our senses
> The understanding of what lies beyond these senses
> The experience of the oneness with each other and with the past
> (Shirres, 1997)

Because of this "divine" inception, Maori understanding of the universe

represents a two-world system, a material world and a spiritual world, which are intimately connected.

It is this connection that forms the foundations of Maori tradition, belief and values. The location of *wairua* (spirituality) within a career context is yet to be fully explored. Yet, there are key Maori values that appear to be influential.

Identifying, searching and locating *wairua* within a career context requires an understanding of *Te Ao Maori* or a Maori worldview. Because no simple definition exists of *wairua,* Maori weave together many other values and concepts in their construction. In a very generic sense, many familiar concepts such as values, interests, passion, dreams and soul may liken *wairua* to these common career concepts.

For Maori, work and career are synonymous. Work is an integrated activity of life and is noble and rewarding in itself. Maori do not differentiate between work and other life activities. Work, wherever it occurs, is both an activity and a place where we find peace, happiness, and fulfilment. Interconnected to Maori understanding of work is respect. In work, respect is held for the materials that are worked with, for what is produced and for the co-workers as well as for those who are the recipients of the outcome of work (Patterson, 1992). Work is therefore not an activity to be avoided or belittled. Work is the means for personal fulfilment.

If we could link aspects of our "person" to our career goals, we may feel more satisfied, challenged, and at peace within the workplace. For Maori, this seems too simplistic an attempt, to "fit" *wairua* into a careers context. *Wairua* is much more than what a person enjoys doing, and what is important in work. To locate *wairua* in career choices and decisions, merely identifying a dream job or a personal passion, is insufficient. For Maori, it is about discovering the "me" within the "we and the us" of *Te Ao Maori. Wairua* exists within the individual, not within the workplace or the type of employment, job or career. Whatever work is done, how it is done and why it is done contain elements of *wairua* for that person.

To identify *wairua* within a Maori person, many other dimensions and values must be considered. To translate this into a specific job or career may be impossible because the process incorporates so many other aspects of a person's life. *Wairua* will never exist within one place such as a job or work, for it is so much more encompassing.

Connection with the land

With the intimate relationships between the spiritual and material, people and key elements in the universe, Maori understand that everyone and everything has a *wairua,* that is, both a physical body and a spirit. Everyone and everything therefore should be treated with respect – people, the land, forest, birds, and the sea.

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Such is the importance of the connection between people and the environment that each has become synonymous with identifying oneself as Maori. "The physical and spiritual well-being of Maori is (sic) linked to the land that you belong to and relate to" (Pere, 1982, p. 18). Literally, this means people belong to the land rather than the land belongs people!

A Maori introduction may therefore contain the following expressions of oneness with the land;

Ko Pukehapopo te maunga - Pukehapopo is the mountain
Ko Waiomoko te awa - Waiomoko the river
Ko Ngati Konohi te hapu - Ngati Konohi the family
Ko Ngati Porou to iwi - Ngati Porou the people
Ko Lynette Reid ahau - I am Lynette Reid

Connection with ancestors

Maori also acknowledge *tupuna* or ancestors. All those who have come before, both living and dead, have gifted the person with the legacy of *whakapapa* or ancestry. This legacy is connected to the unique landforms (e.g., mountains and rivers) of where a Maori person is from, indicating tribal geographical location within New Zealand.

Feeling, seeing and hearing *wairua* from these people and the environment is the same as seeing who and what a Maori is. With this guidance, wisdom, knowledge and advice, Maori are able to enhance the roles and responsibilities in maintaining integrity and teachings. It is not enough to simply recite one's *whakapapa* but to also understand and act on the *wairua* of my *tupuna* or ancestors.

This ensures that actions of individual descendants are placed into the context of *whanau* or family, *hapu* or sub-tribe and *iwi* or tribe (Patterson, 1992). Thereby the importance of the collective is maintained.

Each tribe in New Zealand *Aotearoa* is located in different geographical regions. They may, for instance, live close to the sea or to the forest or to the mountains. Such locations can signify the *mana* or power, authority or prestige of a tribe.

For Maori, the significance of *whanau* or extended family is paramount. When coupled with decisions on future employment and career prospects, the influence of *hapu* or sub-tribe and *iwi* can also be felt.

Mana whenua can be associated with the "possession of land, the ability of the land to produce the bounties of nature and the land's ability to produce a livelihood for family and the tribe" (Barlow, 1991). It may be decided, often by an elder or other person of high status, that an individual from a particular *iwi* or tribe will continue to uphold the *mana* of their *iwi* by entering certain fields. It may be too that the *iwi* have declared a need for more skilled people in new fields in order to sustain future generations and enhance current resources the *iwi* are responsible for. The *wairua*

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within the environment and the people from the region can be translated into particular career goals and aspirations for *whanau* members.

The decision of who will pursue *iwi* initiated goals can sometimes be established by the *mana* within the *whanau* or *mana tangata* (power acquired by an individual with certain skills or knowledge in particular areas). *Whanau* will often "unite together to keep their mana intact in dealings with people outside their kinship group" (Pere, 1982, p. 33 – 34).

An example that illustrates the role of *whanau, hapu and iwi* in career decision-making can be seen within one *iwi*, the *Ngati Porou*. As a tribe, *Ngati Porou* have an illustrious and revered connection with the 28th Maori Battalion who fought bravely in World War II. The East Coast area of New Zealand, which is the *Ngati Porou* homeland, was home to many young men who were the first to enlist in the battalion. Many young men from the region have subsequently been attracted to careers in the Armed Forces and New Zealand Police Force. The New Zealand Army still has large numbers of *Ngati Porou* recruits.

Whakapapa or genealogical descent can be used to determine who will take up the occupational traditions. Understanding the special gifts, abilities and talents of *tupuna*, or ancestors, may mean that a continuance of such skills is assumed. The assumption is that such gifts are passed on or laid upon another generation (Barlow, 1991) only serves to enhance the *mana* of such a responsibility and role. Other *whanau* members (often elders) have been known to "feel" or "sense" such gifts in others. Individuals may not themselves recognize the talents seen in them by others, but yet there is a great willingness to follow the advice. Time is allowed in hope that individuals will realize the career direction themselves, but there is belief that the right moment will present itself. Such points in time are often related to significant events, e.g., a *tangi* or death of a significant person, a crisis within the *whanau*, etc. As a collective, the *whanau and hapu* will discuss the impact of such events to determine a way forward. The revelation of shared and privileged information is sometimes viewed as a catalyst for career decision-making by both the individual and their immediate *whanau* and *hapu*.

Realizing the relationship between oneself and the world as a whole is the essence of *wairua*. Being able to incorporate these relationships into daily lives and decisions can be difficult to articulate within a contemporary lifestyle. Today, common advice from Maori parents for their children is "follow your heart, do what makes you happy." This sentiment is a further expression of the essence of *wairua*. Pursuit of a specific job, occupation or career is not the focus. Most important is the attainment of a clarity and understanding about one's connectedness to people and the environment in the material and spiritual worlds.

Birth order can also impact on decisions made on career direction and focus. The *matamua* or first-born is usually believed to have inherited the greatest share of skills and abilities. This person holds the *mana* of the *whanau* (Metge, 1995).

The *potiki* or youngest also receives a special increment of *mana* (Metge, 1995). This does not mean that others are overlooked simply because of birth order. If it is recognized by *whanau, hapu* or *iwi* that neither the eldest nor youngest possess the necessary skills, the role may be passed to others. However, sustained time and effort will be placed with the *matamua* and *potiki* to enhance such inherited *mana.*

Relationships

The contemporary Maori worldview is defined by not one, but a range of understandings of the concept *wairua.* As already noted, there is no one simple translation of Maori concepts. Instead, to define *wairua* and put it into practice, the relationship of spirituality to a host of other concepts is necessary. Drawing upon multiple cultural facets to synthesize an understanding of any one concept stresses the value of relationships (McNatty & Roa, 2002). Concepts can assume additional shades of meaning through these relationships.

As an example of the multiple inputs necessary to conceptualize Maori understanding of modern institutions, Maori theorists and academics have reframed traditional concepts to illustrate Maori perspective on issues of health, education and social issues.

Durie (1985) introduced a framework for understanding Maori health perspectives he called *Te Whare Tapa Wha.* The model proposes four dimensions of health, and compares them to the four sides of a *whare* or house:

Taha wairua – spirituality
Taha hinengaro – thoughts and feelings
Taha tinana – physical health
Taha whanau – family

Taha wairua was seen as the most essential component for health as "it implies a capacity to have faith and to be able to understand the links between the human situation and the environment...belief in God is one reflection of *wairua* but it may also be evident in relationships with the environment" (Durie, 1998, p.70).

The concept of health and wellness is conceptualized as an interaction of each wall in a house. Each is unique, but relies on the balance and connection with the other walls to ensure a solid foundation overall.

Pere (1984) produced another similar model. She used the octopus to illustrate the major features of health from a Maori family perspective.

Again, *wairuatanga* or spirituality was seen as a fundamental key to overall wellness.

What these and other models illustrate is the key position *wairua* has when considering a Maori worldview. Furthermore, it strengthens the understanding that for Maori, everything is connected and relationships are respected within a context that supersedes the physical dimensions of self and one's universe.

Summary And Conclusions

New Zealand Maori culture is rich with spiritual beliefs and practices. While it should be obvious that only those who have been immersed in and have accepted a specific culture can be considered "members" of the culture, we believe that others can employ the tenets of a culture to reflect upon their beliefs and practices. We find it interesting that post-modernist career counselling models such as those of Peavy (1994) and Cochran (1997) emphasize careers as quests for personal meaning. While different, we see some parallels between post-modernist thinking and some of the concepts found in *Te Ao Maori*. Both acknowledge processes that depart from the linear, positivist and rational tradition of most Western models for career development and counselling. Further, both encourage the use of story-telling as a means for revealing and understanding "self meaning" within the life-career context. We therefore encourage the reader to reflect upon the following issues that are suggested by *Te Ao Maori* for viewing one's own career and the careers of our clients.

What is my awareness of a "bigger picture" beyond what my physical senses reveal?

What harmony and acceptance exists between what is expected of me (by self and others) and what I can provide?

What *mana* (status) flows from my circumstances and responsibilities?

What *mauri* (life force) is defined by what I am doing?

How am I serving my own needs as well as my *whanau* (family) for now and the near future?

Are there clear connections between my thoughts and actions?

How do I acknowledge connections between myself and

My skills?
The wider environment?
My whanau, hapu and iwi (family and ancestors)?
Work?
My employer and colleagues?

To what degree do I respect the work that I and others do?

What faith and belief do I have in my own *mana*?

How much confidence and respect do I show for myself and other people?

These questions are not unique to Maori culture, but they are essential for Maori. Being aware and attempting to answer them when considering career issues can lead to establishing a spiritual dimension in career. We believe that the spiritual dimension is important for defining and enhancing careers of all people.

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